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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000340

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/OP/NEA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: MAOISTS PAMPHLETEER, PREPARE FOR STRIKE IN CAPITAL

REF: (A) KATHMANDU 0333; (B) KATHMANDU 0278

SUMMARY

11. (U) Maoist insurgents continue to publicize a nationwide strike called for Feb. 22-23 in commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the insurgency and had some success enforcing a local strike in the mid-western and western regions Feb. 10. Security forces have increased checkpoints along city streets and major arteries into the capital in response to reports that Maoist activists plan to infiltrate Kathmandu in the run-up to the strike. A small improvised bomb exploded at a tax office located about one kilometer from the U.S. Embassy Feb. 11, slightly injuring three people inside the Government of Nepal (GON) facility. Air service to and from Lukla, which serves travelers heading for the Everest Base Camp, was restored Feb. 11. End summary.

PAMPHLETS AND POSTERS
IN CAPITAL

12. (U) Maoist activists continue to publicize the upcoming nationwide strike, or bandh, called for Feb. 22-23 (Ref B) in commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the insurgency--including in Kathmandu. Pamphlets and posters promoting adherence to the bandh have been observed along several major thoroughfares in the capital, and at least one activist postering a city wall was reportedly shot and injured by police the night of Feb. 11. Security forces have increased checkpoints along city streets and major arteries into the capital in response to reports that Maoist activists plan to infiltrate Kathmandu in the run-up to the strike.

13. (U) A pamphlet distributed by the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Independent Student Union (Revolutionary) in Kathmandu Feb. 10 called for residents to observe the strike to protest the "martial law" perpetrated on the population by the King and Prime Minister. Besides calling for an end to the state of emergency and anti-terrorism ordinances, the flyer also demands the dissolution of the Constitution and current government; the institution of "revolutionary land reforms"; an end to gender- and caste-based discrimination; and a halt to the "interference of imperialists and expansionists" (which typically refers, in standard Maoist demonology, to the U.S. and India respectively).

STRIKE OBSERVED IN WEST

14. (U) The Maoists experienced some success in locally enforcing a strike called for the mid-western--long regarded the insurgents' strongest base--and western regions Feb. 10. Public transportation reportedly ground to a halt on all major highways in the region for the day; a bus and two trucks traveling to Surkhet in defiance of the ban were set on fire. The day before insurgents destroyed a District Development Committee Office and the home of a former State Minister in Bardiya District in the west.

KATHMANDU TAX OFFICE HIT

15. (U) In the late morning of Feb. 11 a small improvised device exploded in a bathroom of an Inland Revenue Office in the capital, approximately one kilometer from the U.S. Embassy and less than half a kilometer from the French Embassy. Three local employees of the tax office were slightly injured. Although no one has yet claimed responsibility for the bombing, police suspect Maoist involvement.

LUKLA AIRPORT BACK IN BUSINESS

16. (U) Air service to and from Lukla Airport, which had been suspended as of Feb. 2 (Ref B), resumed Feb. 10 after the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) sent reinforcements to guard the facility. RNA helicopters evacuated foreign tourists, including two American citizens, who had been stranded in Lukla, the major entry point for travelers to Mt. Everest Base Camp, the previous week.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) A December 7 bandh called by the insurgents during the state of emergency went generally unobserved in the capital, and the Maoists apparently are trying to ensure that the Feb. 22-23 strike is not a similar bust. In previous years, commemoration of the February anniversary of the insurgency typically kicks off the start of increased dry-season activity for the Maoists. This year, the anniversary coincides with Parliamentary debate on the success of the emergency in controlling the insurgency (Ref A), raising the stakes for both the Maoists and the GON to demonstrate who has the upper hand.

MALINOWSKI